

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: December 3, 2015, 4:30 pm

Commissioners Present: Rita Church, Allison Curran, Lainey Rappaport, Barry Trutor, Donna Waldron

Staff Present: Anne D’Alton, Cemetery Office Assistant; Jesse Bridges, Parks Dept

Public Present: None.

Attachments: Cemetery Annual Report, FY15
Perpetual Care Fund Balance Sheet, FY15
Perpetual Care Fund Income Statement, FY15
Deposits, FY10-FY15
Lot Sales, FY10-FY15
Burials, FY10-FY15

I. Agenda approval

A. Rita Church moved to approve, Barry Trutor seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

II. Approval of Minutes from October 7, 2015 Meeting

A. Trutor moved to approve, Church seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

III. Old Business

- A. Tabled from August 13, 2015 mtg.: Request from staff for Commission approval of mausoleum site. Approval has been granted by Jesse Bridges, via email 10.09.15.
1. Annie D’Alton reported that the buyers purchased a different site privately from owners who had changed their mind about using it, but it was useful to know that the new proposed site near Section 7 is approved so we can offer it as available in the future.
 2. Trutor asked if approval of a mausoleum site is Commission responsibility—Bridges said no, but we like to keep the Commission informed and allow opportunity for input.

IV. Superintendent’s Items

- A. Update on Cemetery repairs.
1. Bridges reported that DPW did a great job on the road repaving.
 2. Slates replaced on office building roof.
 3. \$60,000 in capitol repairs is planned for next year, and \$100,000 for the following year.
 4. A preventative maintenance schedule is being worked on.
 5. Donna Waldron asked about wood rot in Chapel roof, and Lakeview fence. Bridges said he’d check on the Chapel. Fence is an historic structure, so replacement will be costly. Church noted that the Lakeview entrance gate was donated, and that the donor is deceased but family members are still in the area, and might be interested in helping.



V. Commissioner's Items

- A. Commission efforts to seek grants for Cemetery repairs.
 - 1. Waldron noted that Art Cohn of Champlain Maritime Museum and Preservation Burlington have both expressed willingness to help seek grants for monument cleaning and repair, so the Commission needs to start having conversations with these organizations to plan work.
 - 2. Bridges will re-send the list of funding sources he'd sent the Commission earlier.
 - 3. Branch Out Burlington! is planning to have a tree walk in Greenmount Cemetery next year, and they would like the Commission to be present. Waldron would like the Commission to consider how they can help.
 - 4. Bridges asked Trutor what type of help the Vermont Cemetery Association might be able to give. Trutor reported VOCA gives up to \$750 for equipment and material purchases, and will give seminars on monument repair. Deborah Hardy and Jim Woodman are also willing to help.
 - 5. D'Alton asked if there are any liability issues to address with volunteers working in the Cemeteries. Bridges said volunteers do a lot of work for Parks, and they would be covered by the City's insurance. He will check with Gregg Meyer, City Attorney.
 - 6. Lainey Rappaport said a friend told her about a government web site where grants can be found. She will bring info to next meeting.
- B. Forming an alliance with Preservation Burlington.
 - 1. Trutor talked with Liisa during the Preservation Burlington tour at Lakeview, and she is ready to help us; he will contact her.
- C. Update on Cemetery signage.
 - 1. Waldron conferred with Diana Woods at Parks, who said Bridges will describe City's new "way-finding" signage project: Bridges shared a report booklet, and noted these new signs will use icons instead of words so they can work for the many immigrants and French Canadian visitors. It's a City-wide project that will take time to implement.
 - 2. The Friends of Lakeview Cemetery fundraised and purchased a new sign for the Chapel to match the one for Lakeview.
- D. Update on request for issuing trespass letters to people breaking rules in Cemeteries.
 - 1. Bridges is not in favor of this, and neither is the Chief of Police. Church Street is involved with a legal debate on this topic. Chief del Pozo recognizes that less crime tends to occur in well-kept sites. Making public sites more attractive is a better philosophy than keeping them locked, because more people will use them, so there will be less opportunity for criminals to act unseen. It is hard for the police to control criminal activity in public places, especially in good weather. Burlington has lax rules for misdemeanors.
 - 2. Rappaport said Nancy Kirby feels the gate installed in the Greenmount fence is hung the wrong way.
 - 3. Rappaport reports that Neighborhood Planning Assemblies would help protect the Cemeteries from criminal activities.
 - 4. Allison Curran said we need to develop a clear list of specific tasks to make it easier for people to volunteer.



- E. Branch Out Burlington! June tree walk at Greenmount.
 - 1. See V.A.2. above.

- F. Legal responsibility for events held at City-owned Cemeteries.
 - 1. Waldron expressed concern that no staff was present when Preservation Burlington used the Chapel during their tour event. Bridges noted that the City has insurance to pay for accidents.
 - 2. Discussion generated about use of public space for activities that have a fee. Bridges said the sponsoring organization should pay for use of the space if they are going to charge, and the Commission should devise a rule for this. D'Alton said Jeff Shedd did not feel we should charge PB because it is an organization that had a mission concerning history and education, and it is helping to introduce people to the value of the Cemetery. D'Alton noted that Thea Lewis leads her "Ghost Walks" in Lakeview and Greenmount, and she give the Friends a donation. Bridges said this should change. D'Alton also reported that a paranormal organization meets annually in Lakeview to see if they can detect paranormal activity, and we don't charge. Students shoot films, go on history walks with teachers...what are the parameters for charging instead of allowing free use of a public space? Bridges said there is a grey area, but we should charge if the organization charges and if they advertise their event, or if it's something they want to do on a regular basis. People are generally respectful, and Bridges noted that in this regard the issue is easier to deal with in Cemeteries than in parks, where it is a widespread problem.

- G. Meeting Schedule.
 - 1. The schedule is to meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 4:30 in the Cemetery Office, 3x/year, in January, May and September: January 14, 2016, May 12, 2016 and September 8, 2016 are the upcoming meetings.
 - 2. Trutor will invite a VOCA representative to the January meeting, which will be a work session about finding grants.
 - 3. Additional meetings may be needed: dates will be chosen at the January meeting.

- H. Letter from Trutor to City's CAO requesting explanation of the management of the Perpetual Care Fund.
 - 1. Trutor asked if the topic of the letter appropriate. Bridges responded that management of the fund is not in the purview of the Commission, but it is the public's right to seek explanation.
 - 2. Waldron expressed concern that the financial understanding of fund investment is a bit more complicated than what she is available to address, so perhaps Trutor could meet with Bob Rustin on his own and report back to the Commission.
 - 3. Church asked Trutor to verbalize specifically what his request is. Trutor responded that he wants an official report from the person responsible for investing the fund. His sense is that the Commission has not been comfortable with their lack of understanding of the fund, for example, why it isn't invested in a way that brings a better return, why it's in more than one account, and why it appears that some of it is commingled with other City money. The Commission is responsible for voting on the percentage of lot sale revenue that is deposited to the fund, so they should understand the management of the fund. Because it is getting such a low rate of return, the fund is not meeting its purpose, and in response to this, the Commission recently reduced the percentage of lots sale revenue deposited to it.



4. Trutor is happy to approach Rustin on his own, and will modify his letter to refer to the reports provided by D'Alton. He asked for support of the Commission: Waldron moved that he proceed, Church seconded this motion, which was unanimously approved.

5:30 Bridges left the meeting.

VI. Office Report

- A. The Clerk's Office finally corrected the allocation of FY15 late payments out of FY16 and into FY15, so the New World accounts now reconcile with the Cemetery office records, allowing report of FY15 statistics.
- B. Another new account under the Perpetual Care Fund has shown up recently on the Income Statement: Unrealized Gain/Loss-Invest, showing a gain of \$2,122.50 to date in FY16. D'Alton was not informed of the creation this fund, and does not know where the Gain/Loss is coming from.
- C. D'Alton compiled Deposit, Lots Sales and Burial statistics for the past 6 fiscal years and presented it in chart form, to help the Commission understand sources of income and any changes over the years. Notes of interest:
 1. Most of our income comes from burials & lot sales.
 2. Most lots are sold to Burlington Residents. We really need single-grave lots where a monument is allowed! There are only 2 or 3 of these highly-desirable lots left! Section 6 should be surveyed and pinned.
 3. There may have been fewer burials scheduled for Weekends/Holidays since the price was increased in FY14.
 4. Although there are more than casket burials, urn burials have not become more common over the past 6 years.

- VII.** UVM Media students Kathryn Miyahira and Paul Detzer were not able to come to present their film project to the Commission. They did interview D'Alton on film earlier.

VIII. Adjournment

- A. Trutor moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:13. Church seconded this motion. Unanimously approved.